

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 1, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

As you know, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program provides payments to local communities to compensate them for losses to their tax bases that result from the presence of significant amounts of federal land in their counties. These funds are critical to the budgets of local governments, which supply many essential services such as search and rescue, law enforcement, road maintenance and education. The PILT program demonstrates the federal government's partnership with the counties in stewardship of the nation's public lands and in providing services to citizens.

In addition to the regular residents of our country's public land counties, millions of Americans who visit national parks, forests, and other public lands rely on county governments to provide high-quality services and a clean and safe environment. The PILT program makes this possible.

Unfortunately, the Department of the Interior's Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 budget request of \$198 million – \$37 million less than was appropriated for FY 2006 – reverses the positive trend over recent years of incremental increases, moving towards full funding. This places an undue financial hardship on our counties, who are mandated by law to provide many critical public services.

The current authorization level for the PILT program is estimated to be \$350 million for FY 2007. As we work to achieve full funding for PILT, we urge the Committee to provide at least \$240 million for FY 2007. We look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,





Lydia

Mary

John Johnson

Robert A. Nicholas

John Powell

John Ewing

Robert J. Bennett

Tom Hart

Richard Shelby

James Christian

Chris Hoke

Patty Murray

Patrick Leahy

Max Baucus

Frank R. Santenberg

Mark Dayton

Dick Deuk

Lauren

Elizabeth Dale

John Warner

Blanche L. Lincoln

George Allen

Marc Boyer

Tom F. Kelly

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Mike Cryo

Michael B. Emry

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Maria Cantwell

Bill Nelson

Jeff Miller

Rick Warren

Noam Coleman

Art Burt

Red Kennedy

Jim Talent

Joe Neuberger

Rebbie Stebenow

Art Bond

Kent Lott

Em Bayl

Olyvia Lunn

Chris Damm

Herb Kohl

Jon Kyl
